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GRACE AND VIRTUE

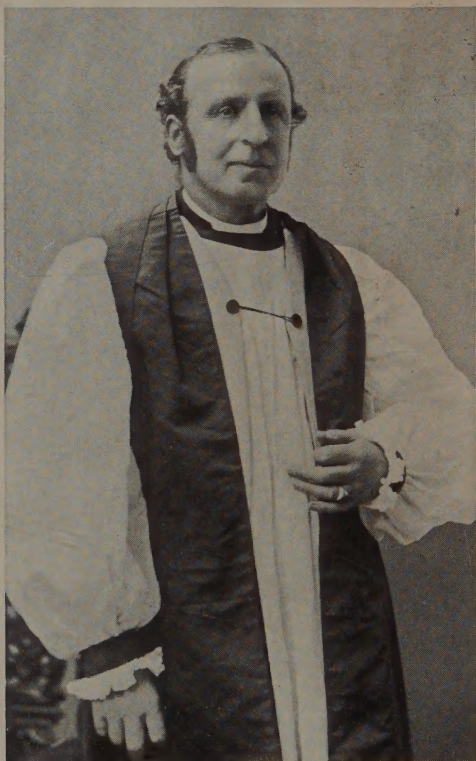


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Grace and Virtue

Some Thoughts on Moral Claims
and Possibilities

By

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Prefatory Note

THE present little volume has been written with a strong desire to bear yet some witness and do some service in the cause of Virtue, and with a conviction always strengthening, as the writer's years advance towards the goal, that the ultimate and immortal force which alone can make possible the fulness of Virtue is the fulness of Grace.

These chapters first appeared in successive numbers of *Prevention*.

HANDLEY DUNELM.

September, 1913.

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GRACE AND VIRTUE

I

INTRODUCTION

THE purpose of these papers is simply and without reserve Christian. All forces which from any point of view aim in earnest at the cleansing, the keeping clean, of personal and common life are entitled to willing and respectful commendation, even though their ranks include minds and hearts which do not accept, at least distinctively, or in its fulness, the Christian confession. We who do, from our souls' centre, own allegiance to the Christ find nothing in our Master's teaching to

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indispose us to join hands in the war for purity with all men and women who so respond to the inmost moral instincts of that nature which was made in the image of God as to give all they have to give of influence and effort to the lifting of common moral ideals and common virtuous practice.

But none the less we must, in a mood, we hope, of reverence for others' consciences, seek to be true to our own, and so to address ourselves to the work in question altogether as Christians. To venture to claim that great name is, if it means what the name was created to mean, to live and act on the principle that for virtue, as for everything that is purely great, the supremely efficacious requisite is Christ. For

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us, He is Christianity. He is very much more than the Founder of the religion. He is the foundation. Nay, He is the religion, from all its great points of view. As a system of truth embodied in a system of facts, Christianity sums itself up ultimately in Jesus Christ, in what He is, in what He did, in what He does, in what He, with an authority vitally rooted in Himself, prescribes and promises. As a system of morals, as a programme of virtue, the Christian code of conduct is but the articulate development of the example-character of Christ. And it finds the profound secret of its assurance that a glorious wholeness of virtue is practically possible for the man, and so for the community, in what we believers call His grace.

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I shall come later to some definition or description of that word Grace. But I cannot help lingering a little here on the threshold, in the porch, as it were, of the sanctuary of grace and virtue, to repeat this avowal of the pervading, the boundless, significance of the Person and power of the Christ of God for what the Christian understands as Virtue, taking virtue in that fullest sense of the great word which connotes right and purity instinct with love. "The Christ of God"; by that august name we mean the Being whose glories of nature and achievement are set out, however imperfectly, in the creed called Nicene, which is only the essay of the Christian community, at a formative and vastly critical epoch, to focus and

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co-ordinate the account of Him given by His apostles. We mean a Being who is on the one hand properly, in the sense of the loftiest monotheism, Divine, so that He is God the Son of God, not creature but Creator, while He is on the other hand properly, in the sense of the truest anthropology, human, so that He became Son of a mortal mother, and died at length, after a completely human life, in a human death as literal as possible and under tremendous conditions of self-sacrifice and suffering. We mean one who is thus equally and at once one with the Eternal and one with man; a dual relation altogether unique, and such as to suggest of itself, even if we had not abundant express assurances to that effect, results of

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benefit as from God to man, results, in Christian parlance, of "blessing," which must be in their possibilities immensely large.

This wonderful Being, when we go behind the majestically concise utterances of the creed and come to the records on which it is based, appears before the human spirit as having thus entered time from eternity, as having thus wedded in His person humanity with Deity, for two great purposes of goodness above all. He "came" that He might "bear our sins," as the one possible sustainer of our tremendous liability. For He is at once one with the eternal personal Law, and one with the human subject of that Law, who has violated it by the selfward set of his will, and now stands accused

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and bankrupt at its bar; bankrupt till the Incarnate, the Man of men, one with him, takes the liability for him. And then, and in a vital and innermost connexion, He "came" that He might be our cause and secret of a more than restoration to lost moral wholeness. By binding His absolute and pure humanity to us in our broken estate, by letting in upon us, in ways of His revealing, through His union with us, all the forces of the Spirit of God, He makes possible the regeneration of our will, the new birth of our nature, the unreserved and sustained response of our manhood, joined with His, to the will of God.

He has left on record an articulate expression of His ideas and commands as to our life and conduct.

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It is conveyed largely by a reaffirmation, in His own supreme accent, of the precepts of the law and prophets of Israel, largely also by His own transcendent prophesying of truth and righteousness, and by His inspiration of His first messengers to do the like in His name. But I dare to say that this *legislation* of the Christ, these particular precepts of His sacred will, are less distinctive in His work than the revelation of Himself, by word, but above all by deed, as the personal secret of man's regeneration into the life-conditions under which man can carry those precepts out. Jesus Christ the lawgiver would be to us only another Moses, formidable and aloof, leaving us only more convinced than ever of our failure, if He were not, even more, first and last,

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Jesus Christ the propitiation, and
Jesus Christ the spiritual life-power.

Just thirty years ago I was doing what I could to help in a memorable "Mission" conducted at Cambridge by Messrs. Moody and Sankey, mainly for the students of the University. My part was to offer, with other assistants, spiritual counsel to "inquirers" after the successive meetings. One conversation so occasioned I shall never forget. My interlocutor was a highly educated young Japanese gownsman, sent to England by his government to study political economy. The great evangelist's appeals had strangely arrested him, and drew him, without any great apparent "disturbance of the soul," yet with a quiet intensity, to inquiring. We conversed, among

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other things, about his use of the Christian Scriptures. "I have read much of your sacred Book," he said to me. "I recognize multitudes of its precepts as true and convincing; but our own sacred Books have also their precepts, many of them not unworthy of a place beside yours. What however strikes me in your Book as distinctive is that it alone, in a way I have never seen before, undertakes to shew me *how these things may be done.*"

A few days later this calm, thoughtful, I had almost said dispassionate inquirer, when for the last time Mr. Moody addressed his now thronging mass of young hearers and appealed to them to "decide for Christ," felt (so he afterwards assured me) a spiritual

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revolution within him, sudden yet supremely sane and luminous. He welcomed the Christ with great joy into his innermost being, "formerly so cold and so dead," as Lord and Life, God and Brother. A little later, before many witnesses, I baptized him.

It was a conversion true to the type of the apostolic missions. And I think the first effectual step towards my friend's regenerative crisis was that remarkable insight of his into the *differentia*, the real characteristic, of the Christian revelation. He saw that it was not only a moral ideal, however exalted. It was not only a programme of conduct, however comprehensive and convincing. It was above all things a secret of the peace and of the power which

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are the vital requisites for a free and unreserved obedience to the moral will of God. It was, in short, not a law but a gospel, a message of liberty and life.

Great was the benefit to my own mind and spirit of those interviews with my Japanese friend in that curious "inquiry room," the gallery of the old gymnasium at Cambridge, in 1882. It prepared me for subsequent illustrations of the same profound characteristic of the faith, illustrations presented often in the experience and witness of my friends, and on some occasions, to me most memorable, in my own.

They all came in their essence to this, that the one genuine, the one possible, Christian life-ideal is nothing short of the impartial and whole-hearted quest of virtue, and

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that the one adequate secret for a real and victorious approximation to that ideal (I say approximation, for the ideal is such as always to call the will yet onward) is the incarnate, sacrificed, and triumphant Jesus Christ, welcomed by the will, received into the heart, trusted by the man in the inner and the outer life. For the life of Christian VIRTUE, Christian GRACE is the living requisite.

In subsequent chapters I propose to treat, as practically as I can, some of the problems and ideals of virtue, and to develop the profound connexion of grace with their realization. It seemed right first to spend some reverent direct thought upon Him whose "mind" is the law of virtue and whose living love is grace.

II

GRACE

THE previous chapter was mainly concerned with a Person. Taking without reserve the Christian point of sight, in the historical sense of the word Christian, I called the reader's attention to Jesus Christ as He is presented to us in the New Testament, to the mystery and greatness of His Person, to the unique "natural" relation which He bears on that side to the Supreme and on this side to humanity. Briefly, we considered, or rather recollected, what theology calls His "offices," let us say rather His great all-comprehending office,

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that of the Mediator, the uniting Intermediary, one with God, one with Man. In that supreme and august capacity He appears as related to man for man's benefit in two primary directions. He is the voluntary and effectual bearer of man's sin, the adequate under-goer of his tremendous liabilities before the eternal personal Law. Then also, and in consequence, having met that dread responsibility and discharged it in His death, He passes up out of death into "indissoluble life," and is the source and centre of spiritual life for man. He is now for ever "Christ, who is our Life." He proves Himself to be this in fact, as the race, in its individuals, brings to Him the receptacle of a submissive and reliant will, and so draws the new

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life in from Him, as limbs from head, as branches from root.

It was well to begin thus with the Person. Goethe somewhere says that—

“Gray is all theory, I ween;
The golden tree of life is green.” *

One wholesome tendency of Christian thought at present, or at least of some of its main currents, illustrates those words. Believers to-day cast their beliefs less into terms of abstract theory, into formulas taken apart and as it were suspended in the air, and more into terms of the sacred living phenomena presented by the Person, character, and activities of the Christ of the apostolic writings, studied, as far as may be, immediately and in

* “Denn grau ist alle Theorie,
Und grün des Lebens goldener Baum.”

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themselves. Let not the Christian think that he thus bids adieu to definite mental shapes of faith, to the study and to the use of "doctrines." The results of a true contemplation of the Person will largely result in bringing him back to them. But he will come back to them from another side; he will approach them from above; he will see them and use them in the light not so much of "it" as of "Him," with a vision which perceives that all the "truths" are but rays shed from Him that they may lead man to Him, to have life in Him.

In this chapter I attempt to illustrate this relation between Person and Truth. It will come in the order of our inquiry on grace and virtue to do so. If I may

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indicate thus early what I hope to achieve in this little book, it is somewhat as follows. From the foundation fact of Jesus Christ Himself, already now before us, we pass on here to think of what the apostles tell us of His potency for man's moral life, for man's achievement and development of virtue—in brief, His saving Grace. Our next step will be to ponder Virtue, to analyse its true idea. This study we shall then carry on further, so as to lead it into the region of what I may call the Christian concrete—the life of moral truth, purity, and love, as it stands embodied in the character of Jesus Christ, and then as we find it exemplified in the *morale* of His first disciples. Finally we shall pass to the study of some main details of

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actual experience in the life which we have to live to-day, where Christ's idea of virtue calls for realization amidst the adverse forces around us, and in which, as I hope we shall see, the realization is made possible by His grace. We shall have to think particularly of those types of virtue with which the campaign for public morals is mainly concerned. We shall essay to deal with the virtue of self-control in man's life in the body, of the virtue of reverence for others' purity, of the virtue of the charities and fidelities of home.

So we step forward to-day from the primary thought of Jesus Christ, one with God and one with man, to the thought, vitally consequent, of GRACE.

What, in the Christian sense, is

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grace? The word is beautiful, and it has beautiful connexions. In the Greek of the apostles the counterpart to the Latin *gratia* is *charis* (χάρις). *Charis* has a kinship etymologically with *chara* (χαρά), joy. It suggests the sweetness and charm which awaken joy and blend themselves with it. The light of all that is benign and delighting shines about the word. Both the Greek term and its Latin equivalent, which we have modified out of *gratia* into *grace*, remind us of this in some of their uses, as when we speak of grace of countenance, or mien, or speech, of what sounds gracious, of what looks graceful.

Then the word glides in use from one kindred moral meaning to another. It denotes often kindness, favour, as shewn or as sought

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between man and man ; the *pleasantness* of generous gifts or of propitious attitudes. Passing into the sphere of relation between man and God, it comes prominently to mean the supremely generous kindness with which He who is Love meets in benignant favour the non-desert, the ill-desert, of His sinful creature. This thought in many great passages is so accentuated as to give to the word grace, almost as if that were native to it, a positive significance in that direction, so that we find it acutely contrasted with the whole idea of debt and of desert. " The God of grace " is the God who, for reasons deep within Himself, deals with the guilty as if they were the guiltless, and helps into peace and purity those who had

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merited only rejection and abandonment to themselves. Again it passes, naturally, into denoting the action taken by such love, and the gifts which it gives. Broadly, that action and those gifts fall under two wonderful headings. The first is the divine generosity which accepts and welcomes guilty man as he unites himself, by submissive trust, to Christ his Sacrifice. The second is the same divine generosity as it comes down into man's troubled and unclean heart in "Christ who is our Life," and so works in it that the pollutions are drawn off and banished, the will attuned to the divine, the moral warfare brought to the peace of God, the moral weakness transfigured into a strength, not its own in origin yet its own by use,

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which can indeed win victory, "triumphing against the devil, the world, and the flesh."

Such is that great aspect of grace which is our immediate matter here. Grace is that influence, that action, of the supreme and generous Benignity which finds man self-ruined, thrown out of harmony with God by the "self-spirit," and so deals with him at the centre that the ruin is more than reconstructed, the discord touched into a new harmony by the Maker of the broken lyre. Or rather, remembering again that it is better in spiritual thinking to use terms of the Person rather than of the thing, let us say that grace is GOD working *in* man for his moral restoration and transfiguration, having first worked *for* man by providing pardon and

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welcome after his long rebellion against his Author and his Lord.

Take a memorable illustration from an apostle's own account of grace as known in his personal experience. It is St. Paul, in that astonishing letter, the Second to the Corinthians, in which we find blended continually into one another, in a way infinitely interesting as a mere psychical study, the loftiest revelations of eternal fact with the warmest and most artless avowals of the affections and sorrows of a truly human soul. In the twelfth chapter—but let us banish for the moment the thought of *chapters* as we study the living accents of this almost breathing letter—the writer lifts the veil from a passage in his own soul's story. He tells us of a crisis of intense

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temptation to faith and patience, a tremendous assault, we know not precisely in what form, upon the will through the sentient flesh. How does he meet it? By no stoical isolation within the weak fortress of his unassisted will. He takes the awful problem to another Person, and from that Person he gets answer, and more than answer, in the form of grace. "I besought the Lord thrice that it might depart from me. And He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for thee; my strength gets perfected in weakness.' "* In other words, as we read the scene in the broad light of New Testament ideas at large, the Master responded to the man by undertaking to be his personal secret of triumphant victory. Deep

* See 2 Cor. xii. 7-10.

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within the inner world of consciousness—nay, may we not say, deep below it?—He would Himself be the dynamic cause of a success in which Paul should find himself treading upon the serpent which a moment before was about to crush him. For he goes on to tell us that it was even so, in fact. He did immensely more than not give way. He stepped on a sudden to a new vantage ground of power. “Most gladly therefore will I rather suffer, that the power of Christ may over-shadow me; for when I am weak then am I strong.”

It was a great victory for virtue. Whatever the precise trial was, it had put a tremendous strain upon virtue, upon the upright walk of that human soul in the straight

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path of the will of God. It may have been a drag towards "horrid thoughts profane," or worse. Or, it may have been a drag towards the rebellious despair which rails at God and dies. Whatever was the assault, grace gave to the man this virtuous victory, this magnificently more than victory. Christ in him rose into an animating, overcoming presence. And His servant, as much himself as ever, but full of a power which was not himself, a power given him with divine generosity, sprung as on wings above the baffled enemy.

III

VIRTUE

THE last chapter was occupied with Grace. If I carried the reader with me, we found that grace, like most other of the great Christian words, resolves itself into the attitude and action of a Person ; God in Christ for us, God in Christ in us.

At the risk of a seeming monotony it is worth while simply thus to repeat that statement as we pass on. It belongs to the vitals of Christianity. For Christianity, in all that is essential and distinctive, is "not it but He."

Now we approach the other great

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element of our subject matter. We pass to that august word, VIRTUE ; the *virtus* of the Roman, the *areté* of the Greek.

Virtue, unlike grace, is not a word distinctively scriptural. In the English Bible it occurs very seldom. Of the few places where we read it, some give us the idea of an almost physical power rather than of a moral excellence ; as where our Lord, putting forth His energies to heal, is strikingly said to be conscious “that virtue (literally, ‘power’) had gone out of Him.” In two places* the word is used of the supreme excellences of the supreme Person ; “Shew forth the virtues of Him who called you” ; “He called you by His own glory

* In one of these, 1 Peter ii. 9, the English version renders the Greek by “praises.”

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and virtue." In two biblical places only is the word used in the clear sense of human excellence. In one of them, St. Peter bids his disciples "in their faith to provide virtue." In the other, St. Paul, writing to his Philippian converts, and opening up to them the secrets of personal internal purification, goes on with inspired wisdom to bid them *occupy* the purified thinking power with all that is good. And he concludes a noble sentence (Phil. iv. 8) with the words, "If there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things"; or, as perhaps we may better render, "think these things out."

Very different thus is the frequency of virtue from that of grace in the scriptural vocabulary. In a few beautiful passages

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in the Old Testament our English brings the word in, dressed as adjective or adverb. In Ruth's exquisite idyllic story we find how "all men knew" that the young Moabite widow was "a virtuous woman." The grand portrait of the true wife and mother which closes the Proverbs depicts her as eminently "a virtuous woman." It crowns itself with the final apostrophe, "Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all." These passages, however (in which the Hebrew word, by the way, is a little less definite than our "virtue," and means, more generally, "worth"), still leave the term comparatively rare in the sacred pages.

Do not let us think however that the idea of the word is com-

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paratively a stranger there. There is no handbook of virtue so complete, so luminous, so profound, as the Bible. There is no word which naturally connotes so complete a virtuousness as the word Christian. And of all the ideals and examples of absolute and exalted virtue there is none in the story of humanity like the CHRIST. But we have to remember for one thing that the business of the Book, its properly distinctive message, is not so much the portrayal of virtue as the unfolding of the divine secret how to be virtuous. Very largely the prophets and apostles take the deliverances of human conscience on fundamental morals for granted, and bend themselves upon the task of shewing us how those deliverances may be realized effectually

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in action. It was this which so powerfully impressed my young Japanese friend at Cambridge, of whom I wrote above. He greatly admired the biblical morality. But he thought he saw something that was not quite unlike it, here and there, in his own sacred books. What he wondered at was the Bible's revelation of grace; its disclosure of the secret "how these things may be done."

Then further, so we find it to be in fact, the Book in its doctrine of morals does not deal much in abstract or collective terms, like virtue. It rather fixes the view upon the bright *particulars* of right being and doing, on the call to truth, and purity, and kindness, and all their fair train of excellences. And let us take it for

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certain that for the rank and file of readers, for the vast majority of the souls of men, this is a surer way than the most eloquent generalizations on virtue could be.

Yet all the while the word is immensely great and beautiful, and full of a golden value, when we try to gather up the details of true goodness into the embracing total.

VIRTUE: what does the word essentially indicate? Essentially and above all, as to the use which ages have imposed upon it, it gives the thought of a genuine and absolute moral truth and rectitude, including the rectitude of purity—the repudiation of the untrue and of the unclean. It is possible to conceive of pleasant and laudable qualities, even of qualities beautiful in themselves, without the pre-

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sence of such truth and right. Instances can be collected, from most people's experiences, of characters where the amiable, the kindly, the compassionate, the affectionate, were abundantly present, where even a certain emotional force was put into such dispositions, and yet truth and rectitude were lacking, or at best were weak. And I do not think that such characters, with all their attractiveness and, in a sense, on certain sides, their goodness, would ever be labelled *virtuous*. No, the word virtue, as it passes among men to-day, demands absolutely the presence, dominant and vital, of what I may call the stricter goodnesses, the qualities which answer not to the pleasing but to the rightful. The virtuous man, the virtuous

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woman, is nothing if not truthful, nothing if not resolutely pure.

This has to do, no doubt, historically, with the etymology of the word. In Greek the word *aretê* is connected in origin with the word *arrhên*, "masculine." And exactly the same is the case with the Latin *virtus*. It is obviously akin to *vir* and its derivative *virilis*, which we English know as *virile*. The thought of *manly* excellence lies at its heart. In its oldest use accordingly it freely denoted excellences other than moral, provided they were masculine—the excellence of martial courage for example. But when virtue came to rank as a great moral word, it still kept its nature, and therefore it points us always to the sort of goodness which above

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all things is bravely true to right. Virtue is goodness armed, and ready for the march, the vigil, and the combat. Virtue is loyalty to a stainless King, fidelity to a righteous law. It need not for one moment be harsh, unkindly, violent ; its glory goes when it forgets " the law of kindness." But its attitude even so is fidelity to *the law*. Virtue will take the form of kindness, and speak with the accent of kindness, on every possible right occasion—only, not simply because it is pleasant but because it is supremely right.

Thus virtue, analysed to its inmost essence, proves itself true in its idea to its etymology, and with a far profounder truth than would present itself to the far-away first users of the word *virtus*. To them,

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very likely, the manliness, the *virility*, which the word suggested went little beyond the warrior's scorn of danger and force of limb. Seen in a purer and stronger moral light, it means still the distinctive *virile* quality, only it speaks to us now of a strength and courage proper to a human nature which was made in the image of the Holy One. Therefore, it is a strength and a courage essentially moral. It is the special quality of the "faithful soldier and servant" of righteousness, and, not least, of the righteousness which means absolute correspondence of will and working with the divine edict of purity.

It may be man that is virtuous, it may be woman. But in either case it is the *virile* element of the common manhood that comes out

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in virtue. It is virtue when the will, against a thousand pleas of expediency and ease, decides for duty against gain, against selfish pleasure, against a comfortable drift down the stream of unworthy popular opinion or popular practice. It is virtue which says, perhaps in face of a whole world upon the other side, that *this* must be my choice, for the sole reason that it is right. It was virtue when the three Hebrew youths, commanded to bow before the despot's golden idol, said that they would not do it, and faced the tremendous furnace rather than yield. It was virtue when the lonely Baptist in Herod's evil court said to the adulterer on the throne, "It is not lawful for thee to have her." It was virtue, raised to rapture and

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vision, when Stephen charged his judges with murderous high treason against their divine Prince, and met the crashing stones with his eyes fixed on the unveiled glory above. It was virtue when Polycarp chose the stake rather than "blaspheme his King who had saved him," and when Blandina, rather than deny the same Name, gave her body to torturing death. It was virtue when Luther stood defenceless before Emperor and Diet, and said, with a perfect modesty but with a strength that could not be shaken, "Here stand I; I can do no otherwise; 'so help me God.'" And it is virtue, as true to its idea as in those great examples, though never to be recorded in earth's histories, when boy or girl, man or woman, against

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the world, the devil, and the flesh, says, "I will not" to the wrong, and "I will" to the right.

"Virtue, beloved Form, celestial Birth,"

so strong, so beautiful, how shall we exalt the great word, the fair idea, as we should? How shall we seek and strive aright to contribute our small aid, by life, word, work, to the revival and new enthronement of its power in a world so woefully in peril of forgetfulness and indifference amidst its pleasures and its strifes?

All the while, the more we ponder it, so much the more it points us, it draws us, backward and inward, beyond itself, to grace. For the faculty to see truly all the beauty of virtue, and the perfect will and power to realize that

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beauty in actual rectitude and purity, resides in the eternal Author and Archetype of Virtue. "It cometh down from the Father of lights." It comes from God for us ; it resides in God in us.

IV

VIRTUE EMBODIED IN JESUS CHRIST

WE have considered Virtue, the word and the thing. We find it to be, if so it may be put, goodness in its virile aspect, goodness armed and disciplined, equipped for tenacity, for endurance, for conflict; goodness therefore in the type of rectitude and purity, maintained resolutely and at all costs, rather than in types of a tenderer sort—pleasantness, gentleness, sympathy, and the like.

Our study was followed along Christian lines. For we are concerned in these pages, not with

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virtue alone, but with grace and virtue. So we noted how, on the one hand, the word virtue is scarce in the Christian Scriptures, and how, on the other, the thing virtue is everywhere present, and everywhere appears, directly or indirectly, in a living, a vital, relation with grace.

Now, in that wonderful literature, the supreme display of virtue is given through a Personality. This is precisely true to the method of Christianity. We have seen and have remarked on it already, that the whole system of Christian truth (for it is a system, organic and alive), and each distinct truth of the system, is always, if rightly studied, found to explain itself ultimately as a manifestation, or a function, of that Person who is

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Christianity, namely, Jesus, the Lord Christ. It is in harmony, of course, with this that the ideal which the system goes to realize, as well as the principles and secrets of the system, should be given to us not in an abstract picture of what ought to be, but in a Character, in a Person, which was and which for ever is.

“ECCE HOMO,” “Behold the Man!” I make no attempt here to draw a set portrait of Him whom His disciples worship, trust, and love, as God made Man. I would much rather bow my own head before Him, and, with few words or none, lift my hand at the same moment and point to Him, that my friend and reader may once more *for himself* “consider Him” as He appears in the pages of the

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evangelists. For sure I am that such "consideration," if exercised with the modesty, with the reverence, which the matter reasonably asks for, and with an attention as free from prejudice as we know how to make it, is the *natural* path—in a deep sense of "natural"—to faith. It is the unartificial way to an ultimate conviction that that Person could not be the figment of "art and man's device"; that it is self-evidential of its own supreme fact-character; that to be depicted it must have been seen.

Further, when we thus consider, apprehend, and adore, we are led to recognize, in no merely scholastic and artificial sense, the vital connexion between this Person, this realized Ideal, and these spiritual facts radiating from Him and con-

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verging back upon Him which we call the truths of grace. As the characteristics of His human life impress themselves upon us, taken along with the claim which He makes, in manifold ways, to be not Exemplar only but Life, we find in them, each and all, a formative power, a somewhat which demands reproduction in ourselves. Such is Jesus Christ that He cannot let us alone, nor can we let Him alone. He is indeed the supreme figure of history. But He is totally different from a memory, ages away from us except for our mental hold upon what is recorded of Him. He is vastly rather a Presence, insistent and appealing. "Jesus Christ is alive to-day"; that fact flashed like living lightning on the soul of R. W. Dale, so

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he tells us, when he had written down the above words as the opening of a sermon. He felt already, in the mental sense, quite sure of them, but—they suddenly arrested his whole being at that moment, as if the assertion were a new and startling revelation.

With this recollection, that Jesus Christ, as we “consider Him,” also and at the same moment lays His hands on us, let us come now to think of Him and the great word virtue together.

Nothing must becloud for a moment our view of the infinite tenderness of our Lord. We see Him in the Gospels as the “Friend of sinners” ; the *sympathetic* converser with the wandering, the fallen ; the most gentle of all possible helpers of the heart-broken and unsuccessful

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ful; the kind, I had almost said the fond, lover of the dear little children; “He took them up in His arms, and *blessed them all over*”; this is a fair rendering of the critically ascertained Greek of Mark x. 16. Who does not remember how “Jesus wept” by His friend’s grave? And how again, just outside His own grave, in the silent glory of His victorious exit from it, He proved His death-transcending identity of heart by turning Magdalene’s weeping into ineffable happiness, as He simply uttered *her name*?

But then all the more we must *also* recall the mighty element of indomitable virtue in that character. “The *man* Christ Jesus” was indeed not human only, but—may I write it with reverence—

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virile, in His most sacred goodness. "If there be any virtue," any goodness, strong, armed, ready to withstand, to combat, to conquer, it is seen in its perfection in Him. And be it remembered that in Him it was strictly and properly *human* virtue; goodness living and manifested in manhood, a manhood not one whit the less genuine because of its mysterious, marvelous consciousness of a sinless purity. It was not the virtue of a God disguised as man. It was the virtue of manhood, manhood indeed united personally with Deity, but manhood still, deriving its conquering power of victory, manwise, from the sought presence and aid of God. "Consider Him" as the Virtuous One accordingly. Think, as if the subject was new, of JESUS

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moving step by step to His goal, to the "finishing of the work given Him to do," *at all costs*, at immeasurable costs. Reflect upon the unweariable rectitude, the awful truthfulness, the courage supremely moral, with which He exposes and condemns any and every violation of righteousness and charity, any and every word, act, principle, of unveracity and unreality. We are so accustomed, most of us, to the general impression of the excellences of the Lord that we may very easily miss the realization of the tremendous temptation to Him, again and again (for what might have seemed good ends), to concede and to swerve, however little. The Tempter bent all his force upon Him precisely with that view—to make Him leave *the absolutely*

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straight line, *for a grand purpose*—if He would but make one moral concession, and then at once become the beneficent autocrat of the Roman world ! But He would not. With no easy and unconscious steps, but “*suffering, being tempted,*” He stood, armed, immovable, victorious, in a rectitude that could not, *because it would not*, fail.

It was this which, in its absolute harmony with “the meekness and gentleness of Christ,” makes the glory and the power of His human example. He is, as to the law of righteousness, nothing less than ideal virtue, actual and in person. Study Him as such, and then remember that equally and always He is love, and that He lives to-day, and lives for you, and lives beside you, and invites

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Himself (with your concurrence) to live in you.

Then think of that other main element of virtue, Purity, the sacred sister of her brother, Righteousness. To say that Jesus Christ was pure seems, as I put down the words, almost an irreverence, because almost an impertinence. Such is the impression made by the Gospel portraits, whose literary artlessness is their profound self-evidence of truth to fact, such is the impression of the immaculate moral purity of the Christ, that to assert it seems almost to limit it, or at least to pay it a tribute short of that which worshipping silence would yield. Yet we may without real fear say, and Scripture will bear us out, not only that was the Lord supremely and absolutely

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pure, but that He was so *virtuously*, with a purity, that is to say, which by no means meant the absence of diabolical assault. "We have not an High Priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our weaknesses, but was *in all points* tempted like as we are, yet without sin." And that thought, "without sin," be it remembered, does not for a moment imply a lack of sympathy with our struggles, with our wounds and stumblings. For there is no sympathy so deep and perfect as that of a moral victor for the moral vanquished—when the victor not only is strong but *loves*. For he knows all that victory costs, and what the assault has been.

One thought or two, in closing, upon the Lord and sexual purity.

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It is almost obvious to say that the very idea of the glory of absolute fidelity in marriage is the gift of Jesus Christ to man. True, in one wonderful scene* we have Him saying to a detected adulteress, "I do not condemn thee; go, and sin no more." But who can read the story and not see that He meets the woman's sin, with a profound compassion indeed for *her*, but with no indulgence for *it*, while all the time He is aglow with awful indignation over the untruth and uncleanness of the lives of her accusers? And then place in the other scale His tremendous words about the divorce of the marriage tie. Christian men are divided indeed on the grave

* John viii. 1-11: the paragraph has its well-known critical difficulties, but its internal self-evidencing veracity is, I dare to say, assured.

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problem whether or no He favoured an *absolute* prohibition. If we had not St. Matthew's record (Matt. v. 32, xix. 7) we should have to say that He certainly did so. And close to the first of those two passages (see Matt. v. 28, 29) we have the most tremendous warnings; the deadly sin of the lustful look, the call to pluck out the sinning eye.

He who entered time from eternity through human motherhood, through human home, has cast round sex, and parenthood, and all the charities and chastities of home (home actual or potential), the armed embrace of His own absolute virtue, expressing itself in His own imperial command to be virtuous, and His own awful menaces to vice. And then, also, He

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has done more. In that same spotless and victorious purity He has "*offered Himself without spot to God,*" the atonement for our pollutions, the secret of our victorious cleanness in His name.

V

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED

THE theme of Jesus Christ our Lord is inexhaustible. The relation of virtue to His Person and His power falls under that theme, and partakes of its depth and fullness. Some additional comments upon it will not be superfluous.

Once more let me affirm and confess my faith as to what Jesus Christ is, and what He means for man. From the first, alongside the revelation of His glory as God made Man—two natures harmonized in one supreme personal centre—there have appeared travesties or parodies of that revelation. Every

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student of early Christian thought knows how the Ebionite beliefs, and the many phases of Gnosticism, prescribed such phenomena, and how later, in forms more subtle or more cautious, it was still attempted to make Christianity something less than the faith that the Man of Nazareth was, identically and absolutely, the eternal Christ, the eternal Son and Word. And to-day, as I write, the ancient attempt is reattempted. Week by week in England great audiences are being told of a Christ who is not Jesus, of a Jesus who was but an instrument, adopted and then left behind, in the hand of one among many manifestations of the so-called "Christ," who is soon, in some other vehicle, to be manifested again. It is not idle or aimless

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then for the Christian who uses that great word in its historic and spiritual verity, to avow his faith again. I believe that man's one, unique, perfect, eternal hope and Lord is the Child of Bethlehem, the Man of Nazareth, the Lamb of Calvary, the Risen One of the empty tomb, being also the eternal Son, God the Son of God. I believe that He, supreme and alone, is our sacrifice, and that He, supreme and alone, is our life, our living secret of spiritual permanence and power.

Of Him I say a little again here, as this "living secret." As in the previous chapter so now I concentrate the thought upon what He proved to be in character "in the days of His flesh," upon Jesus Christ as the embodiment of virtue.

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For, if we would use Him as the secret of grace for the activities and endurances of the life of virtue, it is doubly important that we should ponder His character. The character is not indeed the proper and inmost secret for us of the power we want ; *that* resides in the force He mysteriously but actually puts forth upon the man who, taking Him at His word, uses Him as his victory. But the character, none the less, carries in it the secondary but mighty inspiration of a supreme example. And also it *guides* the man who seeks the Christ as his strength ; it shows him not only the exemplar who is to form him, but the heart, the will, the sympathy, the love, which is ready to apply to him the strength he craves. To contemplate Jesus

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Christ in Himself, in the profoundly self-evidencing portraits of the Gospels, and *to wait* before them till God works through them, is to see at once a life infinitely wonderful and alluring, and a heart ready beyond all our calculations to respond to the appeal of moral need.

“Consider Him”: that is a reiterated injunction in the Bible. O thou, who wouldst be virtuous indeed, “consider Him.” Let it be thy first step; it is very likely also, another day, to be thy last.

I have already said something of the Lord's attitude towards Woman. Let me emphasize again, at a little greater length, the paradox of its two sides. It is evident on the one hand that He had a profound, tender, reverent sympathy with woman, and that woman found in

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Him a mighty spell of attractive power. Think of the woman at Sychar, drawn by a few patient and a few searching words to an awed but evidently ardent devotion to Him. Think of the woman who cried out of the crowd about the blessedness of the mother who bore and nursed Him. Think of Mary of Bethany, rapt as she listened to Him, and Martha, restless for His comfort. Think of the "unfortunate," restored by Him to herself and to God, paying devotion to His very feet, showering tears and perfumes on them as He lay. Think of the Galilean women in the final scenes, "last at the cross and earliest at the tomb." Remember Magdalene in the garden of the sepulchre, ready to do the impossible for His corpse, to lift it away with her own

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arms to some secure place of rest, if only she might be shewn where it was.

Woman found in Jesus Christ the perfect, the absolute, object for the devotion of her wonderful nature, alike in its emotional depths and tenderness and in its instinct for the heroically strong and true.

And Jesus Christ, as we trace His influence in Scripture and in history, has indeed responded to this devotion of woman. Not by explicit and, so to speak, dogmatic assertions of woman's greatness and claims, not by ignoring for one moment the facts of the plan of God for the sexes, indicated equally in the Bible and in nature, where man appears as reverent leader and protector, while also self-sacrificing partner and companion ; no, but

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by the revealing eloquence of all He was and all He did with woman, and all He taught His apostles to be and do. It is difficult, perhaps it is impossible, without an intimate acquaintance with woman's traditional position in Asiatic life, and its tremendous elements of degradation, to realize the vastness of the work of the Lord Jesus, Himself an Asiatic "according to the flesh," for "God's dear master work," feminine humanity.

To turn for a moment from the Lord to the follower; take St. Peter, the Palestinian countryman, "the pilot of the Galilean lake," inheritor of Levantine traditions like all his fellows. Turn to that small, wonderful, pearl of literature—for such, if it were not in the Bible, everyone would call it—St. Peter's

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First Epistle, and read there (ch. iii. 7) words in which all that is true and pure in the most exalted chivalry of a Galahad lies living and germinant:—"Give honour to the womanly, as to the weaker, vessel." Observe the precept. It does not tell us to pet or to patronize, nor even merely to be polite; it tells us to give honour. It is a command to the man to be the loyal, the respectful, the reverent knight of woman; leader, no doubt, in the large field of human life; the stronger of the two, no doubt, in the average of physical and, on the whole, mental force; but *reverential* to woman all the while.

Between such an ideal and the common practice of the East, ancient or modern, lies a gulf which

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cannot be measured or sounded. And shall I speak of the East only, or only of the ruder and less cultivated times and regions of the West? I am compelled to think that our own modern society, as a whole, far and wide, needs to learn again the lesson of St. Peter, in its essential greatness, as if it were quite a new thing in the world.

Well, but the presence of this Christian ideal as "current coin" in the midst of us, and the realization of it, God be thanked, in uncounted individual instances, is an incalculable gain to humanity. And this is due ultimately, as to active causation, to the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Such precepts as that I have quoted run back for their inspiration to Him. And He

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imparted that inspiration, as I have said, not only by His explicit teachings, but most of all, as I read the Gospels, by His personal attitude towards woman. To woman He did indeed give honour.

Then, on the other hand, in this study of His bearing and aspect towards feminine humanity, we have all the more to remember the immaculate virtue of it, the stern spotlessness. I am not aware that the supreme aloofness of the Lord from even the semblance of undue familiarities has ever been questioned, even among His opponents, unless in some specially bad quarters in ancient anti-Christian literature. In the Gospels we see Him accused of many things, even of *conviviality*, because of His gracious fellowship with all innocent sides of

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human life. But not even the Sadducees appear ever to have breathed upon the reputation of His virtue. Far rather, so we gather (as, for instance, from the incident of the adulterous woman, John viii.), they shrank from the awful intuitions of His purity, and owned their own secret pollutions, however silently, when He charged them. They knew, with a consciousness deeper than all insincerities, that He had the right to accuse and to expose, for He was Himself stainless. When, in one tremendous sentence (Matt. v. 28), He told men that a lustful look was adultery, He said what only purity can say with power. The words bespeak a mind to which the whole element of animalism in the region of sex is infinitely loathsome. The

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speaker of that thought must have hated with an inexpressible disgust the mis-called "love" which, however it may not go the length of wickedness in act, can think about women, and look at them, and talk about them, in a spirit no more elevated, and much less clean, than that of coarse talk about horses or bullocks.

With His own wonderful graciousness of love and honour He attracted woman's confidence and devotion, and He praised her acts of sacrifice and help towards Himself. He was happy with Martha and Mary. He was the heart-friend of Magdalene. His own holy Mother filled the affections of His heart in death. But it was with *men* exclusively that He surrounded Himself, as to private and imme-

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diate intercourse, and with *men*
He was perpetually dealing in teaching and reasoning.

So this Person stands and moves before us. Great Friend of sacred womanhood, honourer and uplifter of womanhood, in a sense and measure new and wonderful in the world ; and all the time pure with a purity so clear, so severely beautiful, that even the unspotted Knight of the Grail, that noblest figure of the great Arthur legend, is felt to be only the moon to Christ the Sun, a conception which only Christ makes possible.

But then, let us dare to say it, this wonderful Lord Jesus does make possible for others the character typified in Galahad, whose

“ Strength is as the strength of ten
Because his heart is pure.”

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For He stands before us, as we have seen, not only as the "holy, harmless, undefiled One" in Himself. He is presented to us as our Incarnate God, rich in the resources of spiritual power for our avail. He is not a man only, but Man, bearer of pure and perfect manhood for all that "come to God by Him." He offers Himself to *our use*, in all His moral perfectness. Will we trust Him at His word? He will inhabit and possess our wills with His mystical presence. And so His thought, purpose, work, and victory shall be our own.

VI

VIRTUE AS SEEN IN THE FIRST CHRISTIANS

HAVE you ever made a study of primitive Christian morals? The material for such study is ample, and it is accessible to everyone who possesses a New Testament. Outside the New Testament, from dates very nearly contemporary, we have additional material, one specimen of which I shall refer to in due time. But in the New Testament itself is deposited a mass of illustrative facts and principles which is at once the earliest and the most illuminating. It lies before us above all the Epistles,

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that is to say in the letters written by the great primeval missionaries, commonly called the apostles, to the groups of converts and disciples whom they had won to the faith, and who required from time to time their instructions and appeals. Be it remembered that these letters, while public from one point of view, for they were addressed with very few exceptions to communities, were private from another. They were never, in the first instance, written for general publication. The vast non-Christian world around the small circles of faith knew nothing of them. They were, so to speak, family affairs, domestic communications. As such we go to them with confidence for indications, artless because confidential, as to the moral ideals and

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rules, as to the moral sympathies and aims, of these early bearers of the Christian name. They are not coloured accounts, calculated for outsiders, painting rosily the ethical condition of the churches. They move wholly within the believing company, and could only have carried weight and point there by their correspondence with the facts.

This is not the place for any literary handling of New Testament literature. I attempt here, therefore, no reasoned vindication of the early, the *aboriginal*, date of the apostolic Epistles. It may be enough for my purpose here to say that so learned and so independent a student as Adolf Harnack, a man who cannot be classed as an orthodox believer, has within recent years not only allowed but

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asserted the claim of almost all the Epistles to date from the early period where tradition places them, to be in fact the genuine work of the apostles. Among them I shall refer almost exclusively to certain ones which Harnack would date not only within the apostles' lifetime, but early within their period of activity. I shall go above all to the First Epistle to the Thessalonians, which, if not the first, is among the first, of St. Paul's writings; it may be dated, for certain, well within twenty-five years, perhaps within twenty-one, of the death of the Lord.

This little letter (it can be read through with attention in less than a quarter of an hour) contains within its modest compass a golden wealth of manifold interest, per-

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sonal, social, biographical, spiritual, ethical. But I point here to the last only. I interrogate these old and precious pages, old but always new, solely now for their indications of the primeval Christian view of virtue, above all of what we understand by moral virtue, purity. Later we shall see, with ease and decision, how, for these first sons of the faith, virtue stood vitally related to grace.

As the main preliminary to our review, let us briefly recall the tone and standard of common morals which reigned and worked around this Christian circle, whose members had so lately been part and parcel of the current life. Thessalonica, the Salonica of to-day, was then, as now, a Levantine port-town, and in an age when the pre-Christian world

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had sunk wellnigh as low as possible in respect of morals. It is not too much to say, for instance, that fornication was then and there commonly regarded as nearly if not quite as normal and natural a satisfaction of appetite as eating and drinking. As to yet fouler vices, sins banished now into the silence either of uttermost loathing or of conscious shame, sins which even our imperfect legislation on morals visits with long sentences of penal servitude, these things were practised then, and were talked about then, not only in the social depths, but on high levels of culture and position, and with little or no apology.

Well, into this mephitic atmosphere came the message of Christ. It was brought by a Jew, an ex-

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Pharisee, Saul the Tarsian, otherwise St. Paul. He on his part was, to be sure, the heir of immensely nobler moral traditions. For though the Old Testament is not the New, but the preparation for it, it is profoundly true of the Old Testament, when its whole witness to virtue is gathered and weighed, that (as a shrewd American once said of the Bible generally), "sink your shaft where you will, you will always find *Do right* at the bottom." But meanwhile the Pharisee school in Israel was not an ideal school of morals. It perpetually parodied the Law and the Prophets rather than interpreted them. As regards the sanctities of marriage, it favoured a standard very far indeed from the ideal. So I venture to say with decision that the sexual

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morality taught by St. Paul, and welcomed and lived out at Thessalonica, was a morality distinctively and properly Christian. It shews us, in a living specimen of the earliest age, grace and virtue in their organic Christian connection.

With these thoughts in mind turn to the letter before us, this domestic communication, this almost confidential message, to the company of men and women who at Thessalonica had stepped out of their old lives to Jesus Christ as Lord. How has the ex-Pharisee learnt to teach them, and how have they caught his meaning? I quote from the Revised Version the first few verses of the fourth chapter. They run as follows :—

“ We beseech and exhort you, in the Lord Jesus, that as ye received

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of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, even as ye do walk—that ye would abound more and more. For this is the will of God, even your sanctification; that you abstain from fornication; that each one of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honour; not in the passion of lust, even as the Gentiles who know not God; that no man overreach and wrong his brother in the matter; because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as also we forewarned you, and testified. For God called us not for uncleanness but in sanctification. Therefore he that rejecteth, rejecteth not man but God, who giveth His Holy Spirit unto you.”

Note well the stern yet tender decision and absoluteness of the passage. It knows no compromise

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with the horrible yet all-pervading moral obliquity in which the readers had been bred, and which surrounded them still, as the sea surrounds the diver. They are expected to be *total abstainers* from vice, in a world where indulgence, at least as to the principle of it, was ubiquitous. Each individual was to regard his own body with reverence, with honour, "in sanctification," that is to say, under the steady recollection that it was hallowed to be the instrument of God's pure will. The vile selfishness of fornication, its violation at once of manhood and of womanhood for the sake of sheer sensual gratification, its abominable misuse, for the basest sort of pleasure, of the image of God in woman, is simply to be put away and foregone,

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sans phrase; a moral edict which, universally obeyed, would to-day revolutionize the ethical state of Christendom. In the sphere of marriage the most scrupulous, the most chivalrous, honour was to be the absolute rule. Each man, firm and steadfast in sacred self-control, was to revere his neighbour's home, and its holy centre and heart, his neighbour's wedlock.

Over the whole instruction, in its broad, deep, uncompromising purity, impends the merciful revelation of the eternal law of holiness. All is overshadowed by the announced "vengeance" which was for certain to fall on the transgressor against purity; that "wrath of God" which is nothing but His love turned against its eternal opposite, sin. Yes, the wholesome awe

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of that dread warning from the skies is present in all the appeal. But how totally different it is all the while from the arbitrary terrors, the mere *force majeure*, of a non-moral despotism ! In the heart of it beats the life of infinite right and reason, and of a love which " rejoiceth against judgment " when once the transgressing will turns to submit itself to the supreme will of purity and truth.

Here, in one rich and splendid miniature portrait, we have before us the *morale* of original Christianity. We behold the miracle (it is no less) of its absolute contrast and contradiction to the foul traditions and standards all around it. We watch its grandly prompt and uncompromising *volte-face* from the polluted darkness to the fresh

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morning daylight of the very highest law of personal and social cleanliness and moral honour. And we know that this wonderful specimen is but a sample of the whole bright phenomenon of early Christian purity. We turn to the apostolic letters to Rome, to Corinth, to Ephesus, to Colossæ, to the Hebrews, and it is everywhere the same. These disciples of the Crucified, accused, as we know they were, because of their obscurity and because of the enforced privacy of their worship, of all that was vicious, we here detect, *behind the scenes*, welcoming the most absolute possible law of virtue, and living it out.

And we know that it was lived out indeed, taking those first communities as a whole. For we possess indisputable independent evidence that, a

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generation or two later, when the new religion had begun to force itself on the thoughts of thoughtful men, there was nothing which so commended and extended it as the sight, so new, so marvellous, so much like a stream running up the hills, as the beautiful purity of Christian homes.*

And at the back of the miracle of virtue all the while was grace. For the secret was the CHRIST—Instructor, Example, Life, victorious Power. We must say more of this in the next chapter.

* See particularly the testimony (referred to at more length in the next chapter) of the detached but deeply moved observer Aristides, about A.D. 130. It is accessible to English readers in Mrs. Rendel Harris' volume (Hodder and Stoughton), "*The Newly-recovered Apology of Aristides, its Doctrine and Ethics.*"

VII

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED

WE have attempted a short study of Christian virtue as it shewed itself in the earliest bearers of the Christian name. Our treatment is but an outline, drawn without the least attempt to marshal all the details, even all the main and outstanding details, of the noble and beautiful phenomenon. A complete view of the ethics of the Gospel would demand work very different indeed in scale from this small book. But we have seen enough, I hope, of that primeval evangelic virtue to impress upon the mind two main certainties. The one is the

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newness, the originality, of the Christian *morale*, taken as a whole, as a character. The other is the supreme importance attached to the development and manifestation of that character by the first great missionaries of Christ.

i. The originality of the Christian programme of virtue may be illustrated from many sides. Here it may be enough to point to one only, the side—or let us say, rather, the heart—of daily life which is seen in the Christian Home. In some conspicuous passages, notably in Ephesians, in Colossians, and in 1 Peter, the Home comes up for explicit treatment, and we see what was expected in the domestic virtue of husband, of wife, of parent, of child, of master, of servant. But all through the apostles' writings

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we trace the presence of the bright ideal, not least in the assumption rather than the precept that the old polygamist concessions to sensual views of marriage were over, were impossible, in the air of the new virtue. As by a celestial incantation, out of the miry desert of the decadent civilization of the Levant, *something* had called up the radiant wonder of a home life in which it was a matter of course, a thing integral in the day's work, that purity, duty, and unselfish love should be the all-embracing and all-beautiful law. This, in its wonderful completeness of conception and its absoluteness of rule, was a new thing in the world. Christianity *created* the ideal of the perfect home. And it created it, as we shall see a little later, not as a

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“counsel of perfection,” a sort of Utopia, lifted above the reach of common people, a castle in the rosy clouds, but as a thing intended and expected to be realized in human experience all over the new Christendom. Presently we will remind ourselves by good evidence that the expectation was not in vain.

ii. The supreme importance which the apostles attached to the development and manifestation of Christian virtue hardly needs illustration ; it comes out everywhere. As we have seen already, they insist upon it by every argument of love and by every thought of awe and godly fear. They totally refuse to allow “elasticity” in their morals, that sort of elasticity to which to-day we are sometimes in-

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vited by quite respectable voices, but which means all the while the broad and downward road which leads at last to moral perdition. What is above all things remarkable in this urgency and wholeness of the New Testament code of virtue is that, in a sense deep and true, however paradoxical the words will always sound at first, the Gospel, the Good News, the *Evangelium*, is, strictly speaking, not a code or law at all, but something absolutely different. Properly, it is the message of an amnesty, unique and astonishing, for those who have violated law, have dishonoured the eternal code of right, and are accordingly arraigned as guilty in the eternal court. The Gospel proper is addressed to man not as he is an aspirant to virtue in the path of

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discipline, but as he is a sinner, whose mouth is silent, whose last excuse is abandoned, and whose supreme need is mercy, such mercy as may come from divine love in eternal harmony with divine law. Its message accordingly, in its heart and essence, is of the atoning cross, the propitiatory blood ; it speaks of " the sinner's Friend," the Advocate, the Refuge. In terms always surprising when we read them afresh, and as if they meant what they say, it tells man of a pardon, an acceptance, a welcome, a safety, a serene security, won for him by Another, and offered, not to his virtue, but to his submissive reliance upon that Other's word.

Such was this *Evangelium* that its greatest and specially selected messenger, St. Paul, intimates

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plainly enough that he was often met, now by open opponents, now by the false friends who wanted an excuse for moral license, with the eager inference that he meant to suggest a toleration of impurity in the name of divine clemency: "Let us continue in sin that grace may abound."

Now all the while he meant precisely the glorious and immaculate opposite. Only, on the other hand, he entirely declined to tone down his amazing *Evangelium* of free forgiveness, a forgiveness which was to be the starting-point, not the goal. And why? Precisely because he was eager for the goal, because he wanted, above all things, to shew the way to the achievement of perfect virtue in the name of Christ, and because he knew that the dis-

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ciple would never reach that goal if he tried to labour up the hill under the impossible weight of wrong relations with eternal Love. Once let him "know Him whom he *had trusted*," and then, instead of his burthen, he would find wings to lift him up, yea, from strength to strength, from virtue to virtue, in the love of God.

Thus the "Gospel proper," marvellous as it was in its glory of almighty kindness, was yet only the means, though the vitally necessary means, to an end. And that end was holy virtue; the "perfecting of holiness," of armed and conquering purity and truth, "in the fear of God."

That this bright ideal, along the pathway of evangelic mercy, was realized in those first days, we

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know. Early Church history has repelled many a possible student by the prominence in its pages of what a Church historian has called the "unfavourable events" of the story, the dreary narrative of mis-beliefs, and internal strifes, and the bursting up of the spirit of the world within the sanctuary of the Church. But, as with modern newspapers, so with ancient history, it is only too possible to give a prominence to wrong and disaster out of all proportion to the better sides of things. So assuredly it has been in this matter. We have evidence that, in the first Christian generations, the *Christian life* was so lived, in the ranks and files of the faithful, that the world saw in their virtue a glorious difference from itself, and was profoundly

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moved. Even more than by the heroic martyrdoms, I venture to think, the common heart was arrested by the purity of the new life, the sweet virtues of the new home.

About A.D. 130, in the reign of Antoninus Pius, lived and wrote one Aristides.* He was a born pagan, educated and thoughtful. He observed the moral symptoms of his time with attention, and among them he found—the Christians. He had opportunities, it would seem, for wide and prolonged examination of their principles, their ideals, their practice, their tone. And the result was that he wrote and presented to the Roman monarch an account of common Christian virtue which, after eigh-

* See above, p. 86.

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teen long ages, comes to us with an appeal immortally new, calling us to be content with nothing less than such a standard for ourselves to-day.

Let us quote a few sentences :

“ The Christians, O King, have engraved on their minds the commandments of their God, which they keep in the hope and expectation of the world to come. On this account they do not commit adultery nor fornication ; they honour father and mother ; they do good to their enemies ; their wives are pure and their daughters are modest ; and their men abstain from all unlawful wedlock and from all impurity.”

He dilates on many other virtues eminent in these lives of long ago, particularly on the love and sympathy with which the servants of

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the Christian home were surrounded by their "masters according to the flesh." But I have quoted what bears with direct and noble force upon virtue in its form of purity. I have reminded the reader, in the picture drawn by this detached observer, that such virtue was not only a reality but a common and current reality, a fact of everyday Christian social life, at a period when and in a region where "the contrary vices" were in enormous and ubiquitous power in the world out of which these disciples had come and which was still about them everywhere.

And now, what lay at the back of this luminous and arresting phenomenon of homely, stainless virtue? The answer, a thousand times repeated in the New Testament, in

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every varying form of iteration, is one only. It was grace which bore that living fruit. That is to say, as we have seen above, it was Christ, who is grace. The Christian home was sweet at once with purity and with unselfish love, not because of incessant injunctions about the reason and right of it, but because the Lord was the living centre of the life, the Lord, with His supreme and *all-lovable* example, the Lord with His spiritual proximity, His power on the will, His mysterious but actual dwelling in the heart.

The miracle and mystery of their spiritual contact with Him, He being what they knew Him to be, was the most practical and operative thing conceivable upon their thoughts, imaginations, affections,

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wills. The inmost watchword of the faithful, in the apostles' writings, is the formula, "in the Lord," "in Christ," "abiding in Christ," "dwelling in Christ, and Christ in him," "joined to the Lord." Was this a case of meaningless jargon, a hocus-pocus of fanatical ignorance? No, it was the symbol and vehicle of a living power, present and usable, which these people found really victorious against the awful energies of sin around them.

Take one eminent example, eminent I mean in its intense significance. Turn to 1 Cor. vi. 17, and read, marking well its connexion, that short, unfathomable utterance, "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit." What mysticism! Aye, but the point of the "mysticism" is infinitely practical. St. Paul has in

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view a Corinthian man, probably a young man, a convert (not so very long ago) from the shockingly vicious idolatries of that bad metropolis. And he knows that this man will have to live and move amidst the Corinthian world still, and the evil sirens will still sing their horrible songs, sweet and deadly, in his ears. But he knows too that this new-made Christian may now tread victoriously on "serpents and scorpions and all the power of the enemy," and live a stainless, virtuous, holy life—at *Corinth*. How? By recollecting, *and by using*, the fact of the living Christ spiritually conjoined with his frail but regenerate being. He is to say to himself, "I am joined to the Lord; He and I are always together; His power is mine; His Spirit is

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in my breath ; in Him I claim, and in Him I possess, immunity."

So Christ burns and rises into holiness in the young believer's will. So grace comes up in virtue, virtue armed, and watching, and invincible.

What has time to do with such timeless facts? The secret for Corinth then is the secret for England now. In our next chapter we will come nearer home, and find grace coming up in virtue in our later day.

VIII

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WE have given our thoughts in the previous pages, as we proposed, first to grace and then to virtue in themselves. We have gone on to see virtue embodied and lived out in its pure ideal in our Lord Jesus Christ. From Him we passed to His first disciples, the earliest living illustrations of what His grace began at once in that early day to do, transfiguring human lives into living examples of stainless virtue. We saw Him creating in a deeply corrupted world that beautiful moral miracle, a holy home. We saw Him making the recent con-

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vert to His faith, born and bred in an atmosphere of pollution, sincerely and fully true, clean, and kind, "more than conqueror" over falsehood and over lust, a specimen of nobly pure *morale* such as arrested wondering and imitative attention and kindled the wish to know the secret.

Now let us come nearer home. Our own time and its conditions shall be before us now. Who is not aware of the mental fallacy which so easily comes over us when we think, more or less superficially, about the human conditions of a distant past? I mean the fallacy which attributes to the mere "antiquity" of such a time a power to lift its generation above our common difficulties; as if "the ancients" were scarcely bone of our bone and flesh

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of our flesh at all, but rather dwellers in a glamorous world, aloft and apart. We have to recollect, on the contrary, that "it was always modern times." Nineteen centuries ago the heart of man was what it is now, and the common human world told upon that heart, *as to essentials*, with all the crude, unromantic stress which it can bring to bear on us to-day, hindering, tempting, distracting, drawing down.

Therefore, in respect not of difficulty only, but of faculty, "as then, so now." For us in the twentieth century, as much as for other people in the first or second, grace is grace, and virtue is virtue. The ideal human life, true, pure, unselfish, is as fully "livable" to-day as then, for him who will

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use the timeless secret of grace, that is to say, once more, Jesus Christ our Lord.

I shall illustrate this in the simplest, the homeliest, way possible. Putting general reflections very much aside, I shall quote a few concrete cases, fresh from modern life, from young modern life, and let them teach their lesson. My first case goes to illustrate the truth that the Christ, in His incarnate and living virtue, absolute and true, is still the sure *law* of virtue. The others will go to show how He, as of old, is still the divine *life and liberty* in which we modern men, with all our weakness apart from Him, can keep that law.

i. "Now, honour bright, what would He like me to do?" That sentence was the moral watchword

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of an English lad, an apprentice at sea in the merchant service, not many years ago. The life of a sea-going apprentice, as I know from witnesses nearly connected with me, is a very rough life indeed, in a sense not only physical but moral. A fine young fellow of my acquaintance, who had experienced it, expressed himself with a boy's freedom and said, "The young fellow who can't be a Christian on shore should be kicked; but you can't manage it at sea." The young hero of the watchword, however, did "manage it." In a sound conversion he had found the power of grace to make virtue possible, and he did, amidst all sorts of evil conditions, live true. And his moral standard, that sensitive thing which so easily runs down in a bad atmo-

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sphere, was kept high and accurate. How? By the use of his Saviour as his law. When he was tempted, in whatever way, to do wrong, to violate truth and purity, he always, *and at once*, used that watchword, as deep and strong as it was simple: "*Now, honour bright*" (a noble phrase in that connexion), "what would HE like me to do?"

That was a fine preservative against an "elastic morality." And I do not know any other, at once living and infallible. He who is "Author and perfecter of faith" is also and equally "perfecter," perfect and expert exemplar, of virtue. That He is *both at once* makes Him the almighty secret that He is for our moral needs.

Stuart Mill, in his *Liberty*, takes

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occasion to say that no man in moral difficulty and doubt can do much better than endeavour to realize what the view and action of Jesus Christ would have been in such a case. The sceptical philosopher and the converted apprentice were of one mind in this. And the lad applied the profound principle in victorious practice.

ii. "I always used to shut my eyes at once, and say to myself, 'JESUS CHRIST.' " I quote the words from a conversation in which I took part some twenty years ago. A group of friends had met one day in private, brought together by that great occasion, now so long connected with the "deepening of spiritual life and the promotion of practical holiness," the Keswick Convention. The theme of our

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colloquy was the moral trials and struggles of young men, and how we might hope to help them by experience and counsel. I think we all felt the tremendous urgency of the subject; it was for us no academic question. The awful potency of the action of the Evil Power through physical nature upon the will was very present to our hearts. We knew how such force can tell on the unwatchful spirit, not so much as a besieging host tells on a fortress, as in the fashion in which an earthquake, striking upwards from beneath foundations, tells upon a tower. We knew about the whispers of solicitation which come into the soul from beneath, sometimes as if direct from the dark "power of the air," but often through more concrete chan-

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nels, through the voices of wicked men, suggesting that man is so made that he must, more or less, "sin in the flesh," ay, that what bigots call "sin" is after all, in measure, physically good for man.

It is a lie, in physiology as in morals. No physician who is himself true to virtue will hesitate a moment to assure us that it is so—that virtue is as physiologically right as it is eternally rightful. But the whispers will come, and young men hear them. Woe be to the listener who is out of contact with the true antidote, and who parleys! The earthquake will strike him, as if from beneath all foundations, before he is aware.

But my friend, a noble-hearted layman, who in his young manhood had been a mighty athlete, and at

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the time of our talk was an athlete for righteousness as an evangelist to men, spoke thus to us of his early days ; " I was tempted, often and desperately, to obey the lusts of the flesh. God in His mercy brought me through it all, however, clean and victorious. And how ? By nothing of my own ; but, when the tempter beset me, something prompted me *always at once* to shut my eyes, and to say to myself, ' JESUS CHRIST.' And whenever I thus called the Conqueror up from within my heart, where in His mercy He had come to be, the enemy seemed to fly before Him, and the temptation was dead under my feet."

So grace gave victory to virtue. That inscrutable mystery, the spiritual union of man with Christ,

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“Christ dwelling in the heart by faith,” just as it proved itself of old at Corinth to be the most solid and forcible of facts, proved itself in an English heart to-day to be the path to nothing less than “*triumph* against the devil and the flesh.”

“Thanks be to God who *giveth us the victory*, through our Lord Jesus Christ.” The words are sublimely true, in the sense of their first utterance (1 Cor. xv. 57), about our final victory over the grave. They are equally true, with a truth similarly sublime and potent, about our victory now and here over moral “serpents and scorpions, and all the power of the enemy.”

In this secret, in this power of grace to be the omnipotent friend of virtue, one feature of

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unspeakable value is its inexhaustible permanence. “ *Does it last, Wilson ?* ” The question was asked, half mockingly, of another honoured friend of mine when he too, in his younger days, had struck upon our Lord’s open secret for practical holiness, and bore a quiet testimony to its power. “ Does it last ? ” The answer was as profound in significance as it was brief in terms ; “ HE LASTS.”

The Christ of God, at once the embodiment, the law, and the power, of virtue, “ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.” We have seen a little of what He was in the long past “ yesterday ” when Aristides described to Antonine, A.D. 130, the virtue which His grace generated in men and women then, and how the sight

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had arrested and—can we doubt it? —purified the observer's own spirit. We have seen how in the "to-day" of my own generation one young man's heart was kept immune amidst sensual temptation by the use of His potent name. That one instance means the presence around us of a whole world of similar victories.

And the power of such victories on the surrounding society is still, as of old, incalculable for good. Fifty-five years ago a young kinsman of my own was entered as a cadet-student at a military college, which is now no longer existent. When he went into residence the place was a home of vice; virtue was altogether out of fashion. When he left, he had won every academic distinction; but his unique and

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supreme distinction was that, through him, virtue had come to be in power; vice was altogether out of fashion. Under God, how had it come about? The lad, no character of iron, had, just as he began his student-life, come to know the Lord Jesus Christ as his life and light. He lived in college along the line of that discovery, quietly but resolutely, in a strength not his own. Man after man saw, and was drawn, and followed. And so virtue throve and grew—because of grace.

IX

AN APPEAL

IN these concluding pages I turn with simplicity and directness to my reader, and address to him a few words of appeal. I speak in the dark, as regards my ignorance of his personality. Yet I speak heart to heart, as we are men.

First, then, I call him to take his place, with entire decision, either with a clear initial resolve, or as making a "new departure," upon the side of virtue. I ask him to let the glorious word shine and move before him in its majesty and beauty, till the spell of it lifts up the soul with a great desire, with

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an ambition absolutely pure, to be found always, everywhere, "sincere on virtue's side."

At the back of everything else, or rather at the heart of it, I bid him determine, in and by the grace of God, to "purify himself." For the purpose of these pages, I refer here distinctively to purity of bodily habit, purity in respect of those mysteries of sexual function which can so tremendously furnish avenues to moral evil, but which can, let it be said with all the decision possible, be so ruled and hallowed as to be always and fully true to virtue. Yet, while I speak almost wholly of that region of virtue, let me remind my reader that virtue, in its genuine idea, is meant to be *one* thing all through us, and not a mere isolated element

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in our inner world. The man who would be pure in the special sense now in our thoughts will weaken his whole being for the quest of purity if he is lax on other sides of moral truth. To be careless about sincerity, to be anything short of the soul of honour in common business, to yield in anything to selfish greed, to be reckless of temper and tongue, to be lazy, to be intemperate of amusement—these things do not directly connect themselves with bodily impurity, but they weaken the whole *morale*, and so help on indirectly the assaults of sensual evil. To do our real best for purity within us, to lay ourselves most open to the power of God for its complete achievement, we need nothing less than a sane self-discipline *all round*.

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That vital matter however being recollected, I return to my appeal to the reader. I call upon him, as man to man, to *aim high*, to accept nothing as his moral ideal short of what is perfectly clean, perfectly reverent to himself as God's handiwork, perfectly reverent to woman. Man and friend, refuse utterly all compromise in such things. Listen to no plea, from whatever quarter, for a "more elastic morality," an "ethical modernism." Make sure evermore of the unalterable standard which is enjoined by the words of Christ and also embodied in Him, the Man of men, the Son of Man. Take it for certain that real and consistent purity is grandly possible, on His principles, in your own physical and moral life. *Expect success*, along the lines of His

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grace and gifts, which are all summed up in HIMSELF.

“Ye that fear the Lord, *hate evil.*” In your own thought, in your own talk, put away totally the polluted thing. Make no jests over sin. Make it impossible for others to insult you with talk that suggests and that defiles.

Throw your whole weight of personal influence upon the side of social purity. Do what in you lies to bring common opinion, so far as you can touch and move it, to brand impurity in man at least as deeply as impurity in woman. Such work as I have been permitted to do in my pastoral office for the protection or rescue of womanhood has impressed that principle with the utmost emphasis upon my soul. There is cause for fear, if I read

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our time aright, that less rather than more of that conviction is present in society to-day than formerly. The current laxity of discipline in every region of life makes it dangerously possible that the condonation of the fornicator, and even of the adulterer, should grow commoner and easier. If it really is so, it is for you all the more resolutely to set your face the other way. You are not to be the Pharisee, "thanking God that you are not as other men are." But you are to be, humbly yet boldly, the moral Puritan, first toward yourself, then as a contributor to the moral opinion and standard of your world.

Are you an unmarried man? Watch with all your soul against the bachelor's temptations, cy-

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nicism, curiosity, slack habits, neglect of religious duties and helps. In Coventry Patmore's fine words, "be faithful to your future wife." Perhaps that future wife may never come to be. But, none the less, "be faithful"—to woman. There are two attitudes of man towards the other sex, which may be described in terms which, not very different at first sight, are yet so different in reality that the gulf between them has no bottom and no bridge. The one attitude is that of the man who admires women. The other is that of the man who reverences woman.

Are you a married man? Perpetually keep in full view the purity, greatness, glory, of married life. I will not condemn with a narrow bigotry all pleasantries and

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“chaff” about its minor aspects. No one with any sense of the humour which is innocent and kind would do that. But do not carry it far. Reverence unspeakable is due to holy wedlock. Play if you will with the fringes of the subject. But kneel down and do homage before the sacred Thing itself.

True married love, with its endearments, its boundless intimacy, *and* its profound underlying mutual respect, is not only a pure but a profoundly purifying thing. Let it be your happy work to contribute your uttermost, day by day, step by step, to the realization of that bright ideal. Never forget that the besetting weakness of us *men* is selfishness. And always remember that the husband is called, by divine precept, to the precisely

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opposite spirit in his conjugal life. "Husbands," says the great apostle, in his Lord's name, "love your wives—even as *Christ loved the Church.*" And how did the Lord love the Church? In the way of infinite self-sacrifice: "*He gave Himself for it.*"

Study to be the lover, and to be the knight, to the last. I do not want you to practise an obtrusive and unwelcome demonstrativeness. But I am thinking of an unalterable spirit of absolutely loyal affection, shewn just so far as to be *unmistakable* to your life's partner, and carried out into every detail, alike in her presence and remote from it. Of all sad sights one of the saddest is the ardent devotee of the days of courtship changed, perhaps gradually, perhaps lamentably soon,

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into the cool husband of the years of marriage. Of beautiful sights I know none more beautiful than the white-haired husband whose strong tenderness over the wife of his youth, whose delicate respect and consideration for her every need and every due, only grows and deepens with the years, ripening for immortality.

Are you young still in your married life? Then I appeal to you to plan betimes, in concert with your wife, such ideals for your home, for your home habits, for your dear children as they come, as shall make a modest but noble contribution to the conservation, the restoration, of that great and now imperilled gift of God, HOME. You must of course be a man of your period, more or less. We cannot

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mechanically copy every domestic usage of the past. But we can borrow from the noble past of Christian domesticity a hundred principles and examples of priceless value. We can cherish the practice of the apostolic rules for filial and parental duty. We can carry on the old noble reverence for divine things, for the holy Day, for the holy Book, for the worship of the Church, for the prayers of the home. We can cherish with all the ancient loyalty the ordered brightness of a life in which "Christ is the unseen Head of the Family," whose influence is felt and evidenced in everything.

Train your son early in thoughts of all that is true and clean. God guide you how to teach him aright the method of a white life.

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Make it your ambition to plant out in our modern world at least one more home that shall be a school and stronghold of virtue.*

Before I quite close, let me say one heartfelt word to some possible reader, who may know that he has failed. I conjecture no details. I suppose only that you are clearly and gravely conscious of some sort of real moral failure in the matters of which we have thought.

Simple and old-fashioned is my counsel.

First, court and cultivate *repentance*. I mean that sort of "godly sorrow" which shews itself above all in reparation, to the utmost possible, and in an honest "hatred"

*I may be allowed to refer to my *Open Letter to Young Parents*, which forms leaflet No. 21 of the Earl of Meath's "Duty and Discipline Series."

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of the old evil, and in a wholesome dread of yourself, and in a resolute return to God.

Then, cultivate *hope*. Never dare to despair. Look up, and begin again. You have to do with a God who "raiseth up them that are fallen," and who lavishes promises, large and generous, upon the sinner that repenteth.

"God is able." Yes, He is indeed competent, and also supremely willing, to lift you out of your most inveterate fallings and to give you a firm stand upon Himself. He is able, He will rejoice, to keep you there, a day at a time, even to the end.

Failure or no failure, O my friend and brother, that is the last word for you and for me. GOD IS ABLE. Would we indeed be virtuous?

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Then we must come, at every step, empty handed, humble hearted, to clasp the gift of grace. We must take Christ afresh into the heart, to be its Purity, its Power, its All. "My grace is sufficient for thee; my strength gets perfected in weakness."

APPENDIX

THE following paragraphs are taken from a sermon preached in the University Church at Cambridge, in 1887, by the late Dr. C. J. Vaughan, Master of the Temple, Dean of Llandaff, and, for many years previously, Head Master of Harrow School. I heard the sermon (which, unfortunately, was never published in a permanent form), and I still think it perhaps the noblest message from the pulpit to which I ever listened. The text, characteristically brief, was, "*I have been young, and now am old.*" (Psalm xxxvii. 25.)

THE advance of years should teach wisdom ; some reflections, some inferences from facts seen and noted, are forced upon it. Let me utter two of them ; the gravest possible and the most urgent.

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(1) One is a reflection upon what I will call the everlastingness of virtue. You would not smile at the obviousness, the commonplaceness, of the saying if you could realize your arrival at the threescore years and ten. You will have seen then the shipwreck of so many hopes, the discomfiture of so many ambitions, the disconsolateness of so many lives, the ruin of so many homes, just by reason of men, so to say, entering the lists with virtue. Sometimes it has been attempted even by philosophies, falsely so called, unnamings and renaming sin itself; travestyng it into a mere mistake, if even that; a mere misfortune, if even that; a mere imperfection or immaturity, marking a particular stage in the growth of the man or of the race, some day to be developed into a grace and into a robustness which, without passing through that stage, could not have been reached, could not have been realized. Sometimes it has been attempted by some conspicuous alliance between vice and high station, or between vice and wit,

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or between vice and genius, hoping to bear down and overmaster the received estimate, the old nomenclature, of good and evil ; the world looking on the while in suspense, or in complaisance, or in flattery, to see if peradventure the effort can succeed, if by bridge, ford, or tunnel, the great gulf can be made passable. Sometimes, far oftener, far more hopefully, because far more insidiously, it has been attempted by a general relaxation and softening of the sharpness and severity of morals, a tone of civility and compliment and spurious charity, refraining from calling anything by its name, dealing much in whisper and innuendo, yet none the less fertile and prolific in scandal, to the utter destruction of the peace of homes and the comfort of lives ; only refusing to judge a righteous judgment, or so much as to be serious over sins, vices, and crimes.

Against all this the experience of the threescore years and ten enters its stern and solemn protest. All the millenniums of history bear witness to the futility of

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the endeavour to remove the landmark between vice and virtue. Explain it as you may, there is around and above us a mighty something which makes for righteousness. Theories of indifference, fashions of immorality, alliances of might against right, have upon them what St. Paul calls the "evident token of perdition"; "though they toss themselves yet can they not pass over" that boundary of the "perpetual decree" which fences virtue; the gulf between wrong and right is still fixed; we must recognize it or perish. The thing that is right is the thing that is, and the man that is against it is by that very fact "dead while he liveth." "I have been young, and now am old; yet saw I never the righteous forsaken," and if for a moment I have seen the wrongdoer "flourishing like the green bay tree," soon "I went by, and lo, he was not; I sought him, but his place could nowhere be found."

Think it not an unreal thing, brethren, think it not on the other hand a thing

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of course, to be bidden this day to make your choice for a lifetime between wrong and right, between vice and virtue. Let it be known on which side you are. Let not cowardice, let not courtesy, let not good-nature or the fear to wound, prevail with you even for once to smile at or to smile with the evil. It is just these small compromises or small remonstrances which mark you, nay, which make you, on one side or on the other side in the war of good and evil. This is what gives a tone to the life, this is what influences a generation. It shows the real bent of the man, it affects the society in which he lives. It is thus that he forms his habit of viewing things, and this is even more in relation to his general influence than his way of acting. I set before you this day death and life, "the thing that is right," and "peace at the last," or "the thing that is evil," and "the second death."

(2) The everlastingness of virtue is one testimony which age bears to youth, the

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other shall be the everlastingness of the Gospel.

"The everlasting Gospel," St. John calls it, or one utterance of it, in one passage of his great Apocalypse; no title can be more indelibly inscribed upon it for the later age of human life.

The same St. John, if we rightly read the words of his First Epistle, makes the full appreciation of Jesus Christ the characteristic of a Christian old age.

The infancy of believing knows the Atonement, its sins are forgiven, and it knows the Father. The young man is predominantly militant, "the word of God abides in him, and he overcomes the wicked one." It is reserved for the old man, it is his one, twice-repeated, characteristic, to "know Him that is from the beginning," the Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

I think that this is so. "I have been young and now am old," and I seem to see, as I saw not once, how "such a High Priest," just such, "became us."

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